



# In Case You Missed It

## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN DOC HASTINGS



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### **Obama's national ocean policy threatens jobs and economic activities onshore and off**

By House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings  
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In the famous poem “Paul Revere’s Ride,” Revere instructs his fellow patriots to use lanterns to signal whether there’s an attack coming by land or sea. While we may no longer have to fear the British, Americans should be warned of a new threat coming by sea in the form of President Obama’s National Ocean Policy and ocean zoning initiative.

President Obama is using the ocean as his latest regulatory weapon to impose new bureaucratic restrictions on nearly every sector of our economy. While marketed as a common sense plan for the development and protection of our oceans, it is instead being used to create a massive new bureaucracy that would harm our economy.

Established through Executive Order, Mr. Obama with a simple stroke of a pen took unilateral action to impose a massive top-down federal bureaucracy with broad regulatory control over our oceans, Great Lakes, rivers, tributaries and watersheds.

The Executive Order creates a tangled web of regulatory layers that includes: 10 National Policies; a 27-member National Ocean Council; an 18-member Governance Coordinating Committee; and 9 Regional Planning Bodies. This has led to an additional: 9 National Priority Objectives; 9 Strategic Action Plans; 7 National Goals for Coastal Marine Spatial Planning; and 12 Guiding Principles for Coastal Marine Spatial Planning.

Imposing mandatory ocean zoning could place huge portions of our oceans and coasts off-limits, seriously curtailing recreational activities, commercial fishing, and all types of energy development – including renewable energy such as offshore wind farms.

What’s even more alarming is that the impact of this Executive Order is not limited to just our oceans. It establishes regional planning bodies with the authority to regulate as far inland as necessary. All rivers eventually drain into the ocean, which gives this policy the

justification it needs to reach far inland.

For example, the Gulf of Mexico Regional Planning Body will make decisions to regulate activities throughout the entire Mississippi River watershed if those activities have the potential to affect the Gulf of Mexico. This means a policy billed as protecting our oceans will have the ability to regulate inland activities that occur as far north as Minnesota. If farmers and ranchers thought having the EPA in their backyard was bad, wait until the National Ocean Council comes sailing upstream for a visit too.

The American Farm Bureau Federation has raised serious concerns, stating that "it could extend to the regulation of every farm and ranch in the United States."

To make matters worse, taxpayers will be stuck with the considerable financial costs of implementing this Executive Order and the vague and undefined objectives will no doubt be used as fuel for costly frivolous lawsuits to stop or delay federally-permitted activities. Adding to these costs is the lost economic activity and stifled job creation that will result from new restrictions and regulatory uncertainty brought on by the policy.

Over the past year, the Natural Resources Committee has held multiple oversight hearings to investigate the policy, its implementation and potential impacts. However, the Obama administration has refused to answer important questions. That's why I recently supported bipartisan efforts in the House to pause funding for this policy until the true job and economic impacts are known. This pause in funding was supported by over 80 organizations, including the US Chamber of Commerce, American Farm Bureau Federation, National Association of Homebuilders, American Forest & Paper Association, and the National Fisheries Institute.

Millions of Americans depend on the ocean for their livelihoods and there needs to be a balanced, multi-use policy that recognizes both the importance of environmental stewardship and the responsible use of our oceans.

Executive Branch agencies with jurisdiction over our ocean policy can, and should, work in a more coordinated manner, to share information, and reduce duplication of their work. This would save money and could be supported by all. Unfortunately, President Obama's Executive Order pushes far beyond this common ground and uses the ocean as a regulatory tool to limit job-creating activities on both land and sea.

Republican Richard Norman "Doc" Hastings represents Washington's 4th congressional district in the US House of Representatives where he has served since 1995. At the start of the 112th Congress, "Doc" was selected by his colleagues to serve as the chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee. The Natural Resources Committee has jurisdiction over most federal land use and water policies, including national forests, national parks and monuments, wilderness areas, national scenic areas, Indian reservations, BLM lands, fisheries and oceanography.

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